



Frequently Asked Questions

Coconino National Forest – Comment Period for the Proposed Revised Plan and DEIS

The Comment Period

How long is the comment period?

The public is invited to review and provide feedback on the Draft Land and Resource Management Plan for the Coconino National Forest (proposed revised plan) and its accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) during the 90-day comment period which will begin the date the Notice of Availability is published in the Federal Register (anticipated December 20, 2013).

How do I find documents to review?

Electronic versions of the review documents are available online on the Coconino National Forest Planning project Web page (<http://go.usa.gov/jHnY>). Hardcopies and CDs are available at the Coconino National Forest Supervisor's office in Flagstaff and district offices in Flagstaff, Happy Jack, and Sedona. Other resources available online include a reader's guide to the review documents, specialist reports, and supporting analyses such as the Analysis of the Management Situation and the Wilderness Evaluation.

How do I submit comments?

Comments can be submitted electronically by going to the project's Web site (<http://go.usa.gov/jHnY>) and using the "Comment on Project" link on the right sidebar. Electronic comments may also be emailed to: coconino_national_forest_plan_revision_team@fs.fed.us. Hardcopy comments can be mailed to:

Coconino National Forest Supervisor's Office
Attention: Plan Revision
1824 S. Thompson St.
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Please note: any contact information provided by the sender are considered a part of the public record and will become available for public inspection.

Are there public meetings?

The Coconino National Forest will host two rounds of public meetings during the comment period. The first round will take place in January 2014 and will focus on familiarizing people with the contents of the proposed revised plan and DEIS, sharing tips for providing substantive comments, and finding out specific topics participants would like to discuss in the next round of meetings. Round two will take place in February 2014 and will be a workshop format in which participants will have the opportunity to discuss previously identified topics. Meeting dates, locations, and times are as follows:

January: Round One	February: Round Two
January 14th: Flagstaff (3:00-7:00 pm) Location: Flagstaff Aquaplex Meeting Room A 1702 N. Fourth St. Flagstaff, AZ, 86004 Description: Open House and Workshop	February 24th: Flagstaff (3:00-7:00 pm) Location: Flagstaff Aquaplex Meeting Room A 1702 N. Fourth St. Flagstaff, AZ, 86004 Description: Focus Topic/Comment Workshop
January 15th: Sedona (3:00-7:00 pm) Sedona-Oak Creek Airport Conference Room 235 Air Terminal Drive Sedona, AZ 86336 Description: Open House and Workshop	February 25th: Sedona (3:00-7:00 pm) Sedona-Oak Creek Airport Conference Room 235 Air Terminal Drive Sedona, AZ 86336 Description: Focus Topic/Comment Workshop
January 16th: Happy Jack (11:00 am-2:00 pm) Mogollon Rim Ranger District 8738 Ranger Road Happy Jack, AZ 86024 Description: Open Office Hours/Walk-ins	February 26th: Happy Jack (11:00 am-2:00 pm) Mogollon Rim Ranger District 8738 Ranger Road Happy Jack, AZ 86024 Description: Open Office Hours/Walk-ins

What if there is a furlough?

If a furlough occurs in January, the meetings in February will be the only public meetings held during the 90-day comment period. Interested parties can schedule one-on-one meetings with Vern Keller, (928) 527-3415.

Old Plan vs. New Plan

What was retained from the 1987 plan (alternative A)?

Direction from Amendments 12 and 17 of the 1987 plan was incorporated into the proposed revised plan largely intact. While the wording and location of this management area direction was adjusted to fit the format of the proposed revised plan or to be applied more broadly across the Coconino National Forest, the intent behind the direction was retained.

- Land Exchange Restrictions: Direction for land exchange restrictions stated in Amendments 12 and 17 was retained “as-is” in the proposed revised plan. The only changes made were that priority parcels from Amendment 12 that have already been exchanged were removed.

What was not retained?

Some 1987 plan direction was not included for one of the following reasons:

- Projects have already been completed
- Direction repeats law, regulation, or policy, including recovery plans for threatened and endangered species
- Direction is too administrative to be included

- Direction calls out site-specific projects to be completed
- Direction was redundant with forestwide direction
- Direction was outdated

In cases where the Coconino National Forest chose to not carry forward particular content because it was too site-specific but was important to retain, the staff ensured that the intent behind the activity was still captured in desired conditions.

What's different about management areas?

Management areas carried forward from Amendments 12 and 17 were adjusted in the proposed revised plan to avoid redundancy where direction has been applied forestwide or are identical with other management areas. Even though direction may have moved, the new locations of direction have not changed how the direction applies on-the-ground, but rather it may have broadened the applicability of the management area direction across the forest.

What's different about recreation?

The Coconino National Forest proposes a more comprehensive approach to recreation on all 2 million acres of the forest in anticipation of the increased demand for recreation from Arizona's growing population. The proposed revised plan places more emphasis on recreation management and provides more consistent direction across the forest. A key principle of the proposed revised plan is identification of settings that allow for remote experiences outside of wilderness.

What's different about scenery?

The Coconino National Forest proposes an updated framework for scenery management that better incorporates the contribution of human landscapes (i.e., cultural and built environments) and the trade-off between short-term impacts and long-term outcomes.

What's different about vegetation and fire management?

The 1987 plan provides detailed direction for some vegetation types and little to no emphasis on other vegetation types, and some of the direction for vegetation and fire is outdated. Fire language, in particular, is outdated, and the use of wildfires for resource benefit in wilderness and the wildland urban interface is limited. In comparison, the proposed revised plan would provide more balanced direction for an array of vegetation types on the forest, particularly riparian areas, grasslands and pinyon-juniper communities, and it would support restoration of all ecosystems represented on the forest. It emphasizes natural disturbances and natural fire regimes. Vegetation management through fire and timber and range activities have integrated desired conditions so that site-specific projects would be moving towards common ecosystem-based goals. Fire language is updated and the limitations on using wildfires for resource benefit in the wilderness and the wildland urban interface are adjusted to more closely parallel national policy.

What's different about wildlife management?

The proposed revised plan places more emphasis on habitat (i.e., vegetation and physical characteristics) rather than species-specific standards and guidelines. For instance, there is direction specific to turkey in the 1987 plan. In the proposed revised plan, habitat needs would be incorporated into the ecosystem direction. Recovery plan direction for federally listed species is not duplicated in the proposed revised plan so the plan does not have to be amended every time the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service revises a recovery plan. The 1987 plan has 17 management indicator species and the proposed revised plan has 3.

How does the revised plan address public motorized access?

The overall goal of recreation and transportation direction in the proposed revised plan is to improve and maintain settings for forest visitors while balancing the need for motorized access for public enjoyment of the forest and administrative needs. The proposed revised plan identifies areas of the forest as “suitable” and “not suitable” for different motorized uses such as roads, trails, and motorized areas. Currently, these uses may occur in areas that are identified as not suitable in the proposed revised plan, but these roads, trails, or areas may be phased out or relocated over the life of the plan. The forest motor vehicle use map (MVUM) displays the roads, trails, and areas that are open or closed for public motorized access.

What about emergency access such as for a wildfire?

In the proposed revised plan, motorized access for emergency responders, including off-road travel, would be maintained except in designated wilderness. However, new roads, including for administrative uses, would not be constructed in non-suitable areas.

Other Topics

Are there management areas for wildlife habitat?

Alternative C identifies 8 new management areas in the south and east side of the forest intended to protect wildlife from noise disturbance caused by motor vehicles. These areas have guidelines that limit large group events, public motor vehicle access, and the percentage of the area that can be designated a motorized dispersed camping corridor. Administrative activities and non-motorized recreation would continue within these areas under alternative C.

How do the alternatives address old growth?

Alternative A’s standards and guidelines as they relate to old growth remain unchanged; it would retain 20 percent developing or existing old-growth, in 100- to 300-acre stands, across the landscape, with allocation at the ecosystem management area level or 10,000-acre (10K) block. Alternative B, the proposed revised plan, would provide a qualitative description of the distribution of old growth, and amount of some old growth forest components, across the landscape. This direction is updated for different vegetation types and promotes old-growth forest components and large, old trees distributed throughout the landscape, consistent with natural disturbances. Alternative C largely retains the old-growth direction from the 1987 plan except old-growth allocation would be by 6th code watersheds. Outside the 100- to 300-acre stands, alternative C would follow the direction in the proposed revised plan for old growth. The direction for alternative D is the same as alternative B.

How do the alternatives address recreational shooting and snowmobiling?

Recreational shooting and snowmobiling are explicitly addressed in the Recreation and Transportation Suitability section of the proposed revised plan (alternative B) and alternatives C and D. Suitability only applies to new roads, trails, and areas. Currently, there may be roads and trails in areas that the proposed revised plan suggests are not suitable, and those locations would

continue to have public and/or administrative motorized use unless a future site-specific decision changes permitted access. Alternative C identifies certain areas of the forest as not suitable for recreational shooting (i.e., non-hunting shooting) and not suitable for snowmobiling in response to public comments on these uses. In order for the recreational shooting and snowmobiling suitability to be implemented, the forest would need to establish closure orders for these uses.

What information is available about wilderness in the plan revision process?

As a part of the plan revision process, the Coconino National Forest was required to evaluate areas on the forest that could be recommended for wilderness designation. There are four documents on the Web site pertaining to potential wilderness areas:

- The **Inventory and Capability and Need Assessment** documents were used to develop the Potential Wilderness Evaluation.
- The **Potential Wilderness Evaluation** identified 15 potential wilderness areas. Three potential wilderness areas were recommended in alternative B and 13 in alternative C. Alternatives A and D do not recommend any new wilderness areas.
- The **Draft Revised Plan** includes direction for new recommended wilderness.
- The **DEIS** compares the effects of wilderness recommendations by alternative.

Only Congress can designate wilderness areas. If the final alternative selected includes recommendations for wilderness, the recommendations are sent to the Chief of the Forest Service and the Secretary of Agriculture to send on to Congress. The process of drafting and passing a wilderness bill can take an uncertain amount of time. Members of Congress and their staff work with their constituents throughout the legislative portion of the wilderness designation process. If Congress chooses, however, it can designate wilderness at any time and independent of the Forest Service recommendation.

How does plan revision and the travel management process overlap?

The Coconino National Forest recently completed its travel management decision to designate a forestwide system of motorized roads, trails, and areas. Whereas the proposed revised plan provides broad management direction for motorized uses on the Coconino National Forest, the travel management decision specifies, through the MVUM, specific roads, trails, and areas that are designated for motorized uses. During the travel management decision process, some comments were determined to be outside its scope of analysis; however, they were identified as being relevant to the plan revision process and were addressed within its analysis. For example, one comment to establish landscape scale wildlife movement corridors was addressed by the plan revision process and an alternative containing wildlife habitat management areas was analyzed in the DEIS. In the future, the MVUM may be adjusted by site-specific decision to reflect direction in the revised plan once it is approved.

How does plan revision and the Fossil Creek planning process overlap?

The revised plan will incorporate the Fossil Creek Comprehensive River Management Plan as direction by reference. Decisions on recreation, scenery management, and other special areas within the Wild and Scenic River corridor have been deferred to the river planning process. A

description of possible outcomes from the Fossil Creek process is disclosed the cumulative effects sections throughout the DEIS.

How does plan revision and the 4 Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) overlap?

The plan revision and 4FRI teams have worked together to ensure that the decision for restoration activities selected is consistent with the intent of the proposed revised plan. Because the decision will precede the approval of the revised plan, 4FRI evaluated the project in the context of the standards and guidelines in the current plan from 1987 to meet legal requirements.